PANTHER PRESS

OCTOBER ISSUE

Overview

Ask Tori

Tori: My name doesn't stand for anything, and I'm not related to Ms. Torrie in any way! I was named after our school, "Vic-Tori-a Park." I'm here to answer any questions you may have! From friends to education, feel free to ask anything you want an answer to. The form is on Panther Press's Instagram bio!

Freshmen, Fresh Year, Fresh Leadership

With the Grade 9 representative election on October 16, Panther Press is joining the excitement to provide readers with insight. We interviewed the Grade 9 community at Victoria Park to understand better their thoughts on the election and future grade representative, to which we received numerous responses:

Best Idea Ever Had

As I stare up at the ceiling tonight, I lie in anticipation. My eyes search through the inky black veil of darkness and set themselves on the ceiling. They run over the seemingly smooth surface and watch it expand across the top of my room. Although it's hard to see in the dark, if I peer hard enough, I can make out the little bumps that stick out, like white and gray mountains on the rough terrain of my ceiling.

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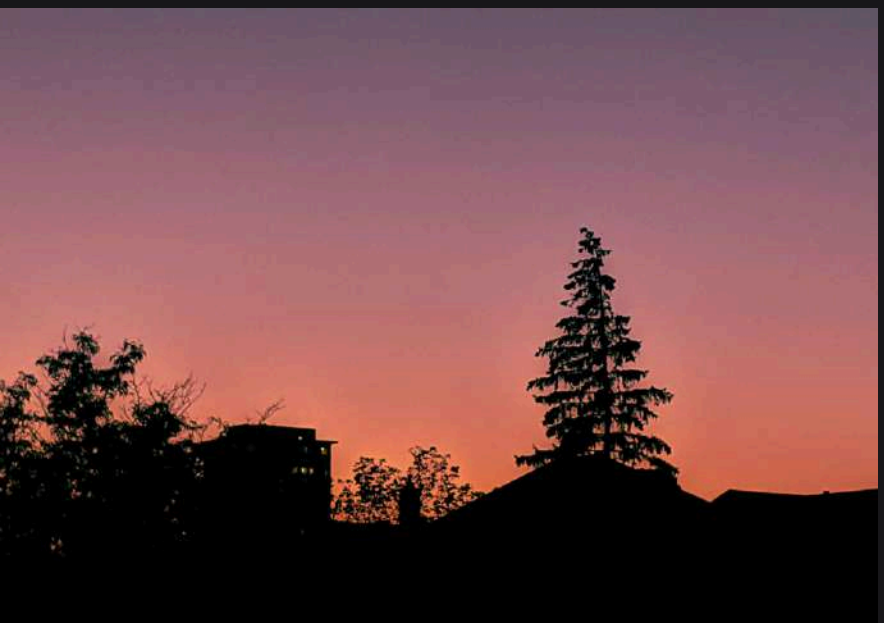

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Camp Tamarack

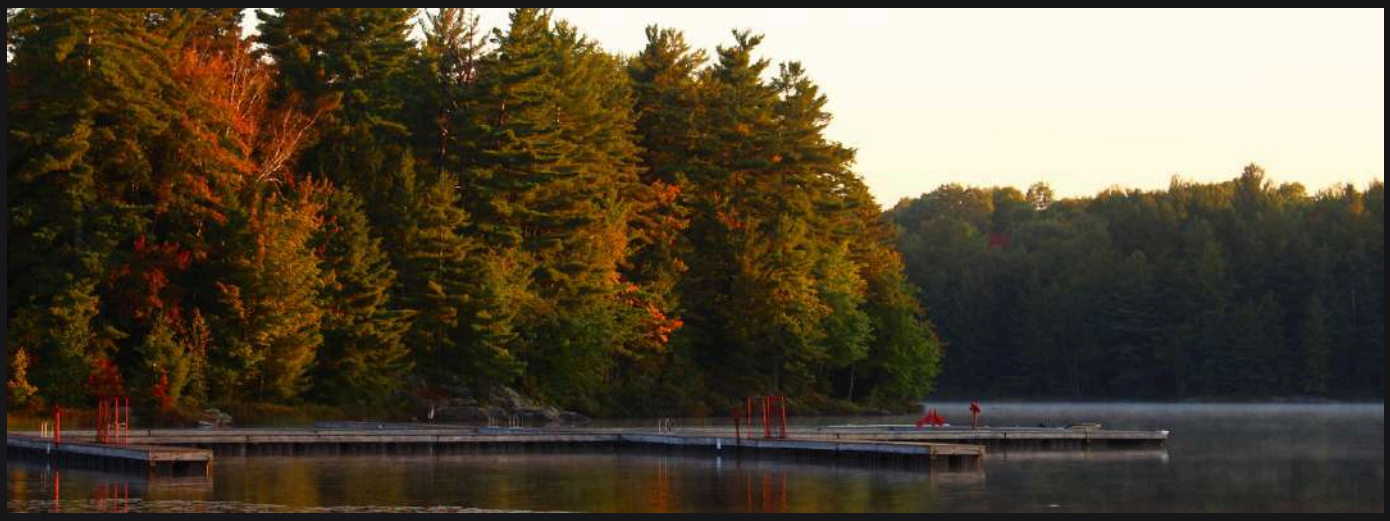
The sight of bustling students and bags lined against the school's brick-and-mortar past the 9:00 AM bell will surely puzzle any unsuspecting passerby. However, to the students of Victoria Park, this is a longstanding school tradition. 9th graders can travel to Camp Tamarack to meet new friends and create unforgettable memories. This year was no different. On Monday, September 16th, the new first-year students left with the older counsellors, beginning their three-day experience of adventure and excitement.

Although the students only took off in mid-September, planning for this event occurred several months prior. Monica, the Theme Coordinator, said the executive team worked together on budgeting, scheduling, and theme preparations over multiple months in the spring. Their work was guided by a rough blueprint from previous years, which gave them ideas and a direction for this year's Camp Tamarack.

In addition to the intense workload of planning, executives also encountered other challenges. Ivy, a Co-Director of Camp Tamarack, explained that the team faced an unpredictable turnout. This made it difficult to assess the number of counsellors they would need, especially when balancing male and female counsellors. Despite the uncertainty, they pushed through with the promotion and successfully attended. Ivy explained that having confidence in the team played a crucial role in overcoming obstacles. She shared, "Trusting my [executive] team to complete every task, trusting the counsellors to be fun leaders for the campers, and trusting the planning process" helped her throughout preparations.

In the end, their hard work came through. Campers engaged in activities such as rock climbing and a ropes course. They also participated in team-building exercises and made their tie-dye shirts. For many campers, this was their first experience living away from family, and they bonded over games of Capture the Flag and campfires at night. Of course, Camp Tamarack is only complete with the annual talent show. Like previous years, the event was held on the second evening, with all the counsellors joining in and performing with the new students. These meticulously planned activities made Camp Tamarack seamlessly enjoyable for the campers, who only had to worry about whether they were first in line for dinner.

After learning how well-planned the whole experience is, it wasn't surprising to hear that Camp Tamarack has been running at Victoria Park for over a decade. Mr. Larratt-Smith, the teacher who started it all, revealed he was inspired by his own experiences with camp in high school. He stated, "I thought the best thing would be for grade 9 students [...] to have the opportunity to meet other students and to do it in a fun place where there [wouldn't be] stressful marks or anything else". When asked about advice he would give to any incoming freshmen, he answered, "Just... try new things. Try new clubs, try new sports teams, and get to know some of the older students". While academics are important, what truly makes high school memorable is stepping out of your comfort zone and embracing new experiences.



Freshmen, Fresh Year, Fresh Leadership

The Grade 9 Representative Election

By Samuel Guo

With the Grade 9 representative election on October 16, Panther Press is joining the excitement to provide readers with insight. We interviewed the Grade 9 community at Victoria Park to understand better their thoughts on the election and future grade representative, to which we received numerous responses:

What do you expect in a Grade 9 representative?

Voters want their representative to be a good representation of the entire grade, with responsibility and intelligence. They stated a representative should “[have] good marks,” be “genuine with good communication skills,” and “[be] willing to go above and beyond.”

What events, hosted by your Grade 9 representative, are you looking forward to?

9th grade voters expect “fun academic events” and “sports events.” They also want more community-based events like “food fairs, fun fairs, [and] scavenger hunts.” Finally, they anticipate potential performances like Grade 9 musicals and talent shows.

Thanks to Raymond Ning and Justin Su for helping with the interviews.

What do you think of the equity of this year’s election?

For this question, we interviewed candidates Muhammad Ali, Alina Chen, and Terry Chen, as well as members of the 9th-grade community.

Alina Chen says, "...as of now, "the election and campaigning processes have been fairly equitable, but that could change in the future." Many voters "ree, claiming the election is "fair and well-"organized."

Muhammad Al" states, "I don't think it is a factor in this election... I feel like every candidate had a fair chance to campaign."

Conversely," some voters believe there may be equity issues, citing bandwagoning, potential gender bias, and voting based on popularity." Alina Chen adds that "popularity may not end up being more influential than the plans of each candidate."

Terry Chen "believes that there's a "50/5there'se i "fluence of the candidates' pop candidates use their qualifications" and also adds "that the IB population has more influence than the non-IB population.

Some voters feel that not everyone "understands what a Grade 9 representative does" or cares about" the election. Muhammad Ali knew "not all students" s are following the updates." He felt more "emphasis should've been on where voting was taking place, outside the cafeteria." Only some voters can access Instagram (blocked on TDSB Wi-Fi), where most campaigning occurs.

All students deserve proper representation, ensuring that everyone is heard. Fortunately, Victoria Park first-year students have high expectations of their future representatives and intriguing perspectives on this election's equity, factors, and process. Thank you to all the Grade 9s who gave their thoughts, and Panther Press wishes you good luck in your future goals at VP!

With the Grade 9 representative election being concluded, Panther Press congratulates the elected Grade 9 representative **Alina Chen.**

Photo Credit: Sarah Wang

According to one of our Student Leadership Council staff advisors, Ms. Yulien, "It was a very close election. That's why it's so important that students vote," mentioning that "it was hard to get students to vote [this year]."

To introduce Victoria Park's new 9th-grade representative, Panther Press interviewed the newly elected Alina Chen.

Samuel Guo: Congratulations on winning the election, and thank you for being here for this interview! Firstly, what encouraged you to run for Grade 9 representative?

Alina Chen: I thought that the prospect of becoming a Grade 9 representative would be a very exciting opportunity. I wanted to be able to represent people and ensure their voices are heard while improving their high school experience.

SG: I see. And how did campaigning help you with your win?

AC: Campaigning helped me win because I got to pester many people in the halls with a poster on my front and back. Surprisingly, self-humiliation was an effective way to advertise and win elections!

SG: And are there any events you are planning to run?

AC: If all goes well, I would run a scavenger hunt so students can interact more with each other and their environment. However, I am open to any suggestions, so make sure to contact me if you have any!

SG: How will you represent the entirety of Grade 9 equitably, even those needing to be heard?

AC: I am approachable, so hopefully, people will feel comfortable talking to me. [...] I can start some Google Forms or suggestion boxes so people can submit suggestions and engage with me.

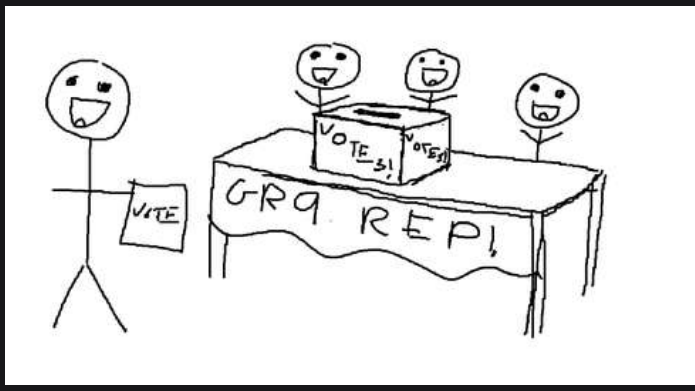


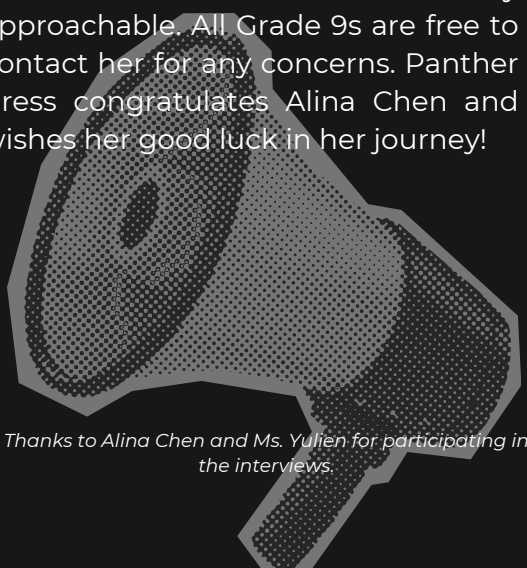
Photo Credit: Raymond Ning

SG: Finally, would you like to give us a fun fact about yourself?

AC: I have two guinea pigs at @wildcheetoluckypotter!

SG: Thank you for your time, and good luck!

Alina Chen will strive to effectively represent Victoria Park's freshmen with her thoughtfulness and dedication. She will also be very approachable. All Grade 9s are free to contact her for any concerns. Panther Press congratulates Alina Chen and wishes her good luck in her journey!



Thanks to Alina Chen and Ms. Yulien for participating in the interviews.

Falls Sports Recap

A look at Fall 2024 Sports

By Setayesh Rustam Khan

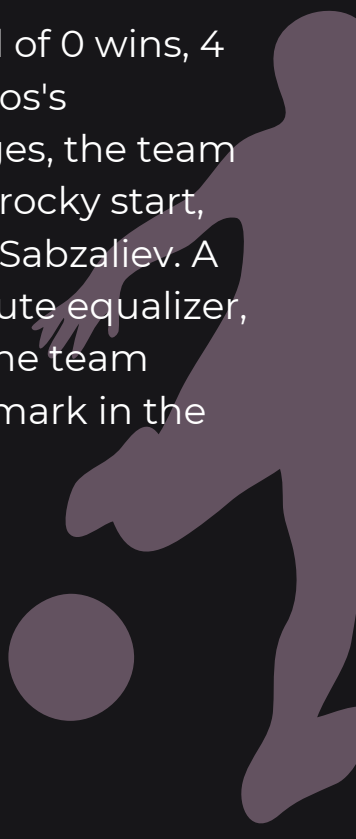
As the leaves fall and the school year picks up speed, Victoria Park's sports teams have been hard at work, competing and representing our school with pride. This season has seen some exceptional performances from our teams. Here's a recap of our fall 2024 sports season, highlighting the dedication, leadership, and meaningful moments that defined our Panthers.

Spike to Success: Volleyball

The Senior and Junior boys' volleyball teams have shown impressive growth. While the Junior team, led by Jachin Gomez and Siddharth Tamali, seeks its first win, it has made significant progress. Senior leader Angjelo Kola has motivated and uplifted his team. Both teams continue to grow, aiming to turn their hard work into victories.

Kicking into Gear: Soccer

The Junior Boys team has had a tough season, with a record of 0 wins, 4 losses, and 1 tie. In a recent game, Alexandros Theodoropoulos's spectacular bicycle kick secured a 1-1 draw. Despite challenges, the team remains focused on growth and earning its first win. After a rocky start, the Senior Boys rallied under the leadership of Captain Max Sabzaliev. A defining moment came when Daniel Tian scored a last-minute equalizer, securing a playoff berth for the first time in over a decade. The team looks forward to their semifinal match, ready to make their mark in the playoffs.



Crossing the Finish Line: Cross-Country

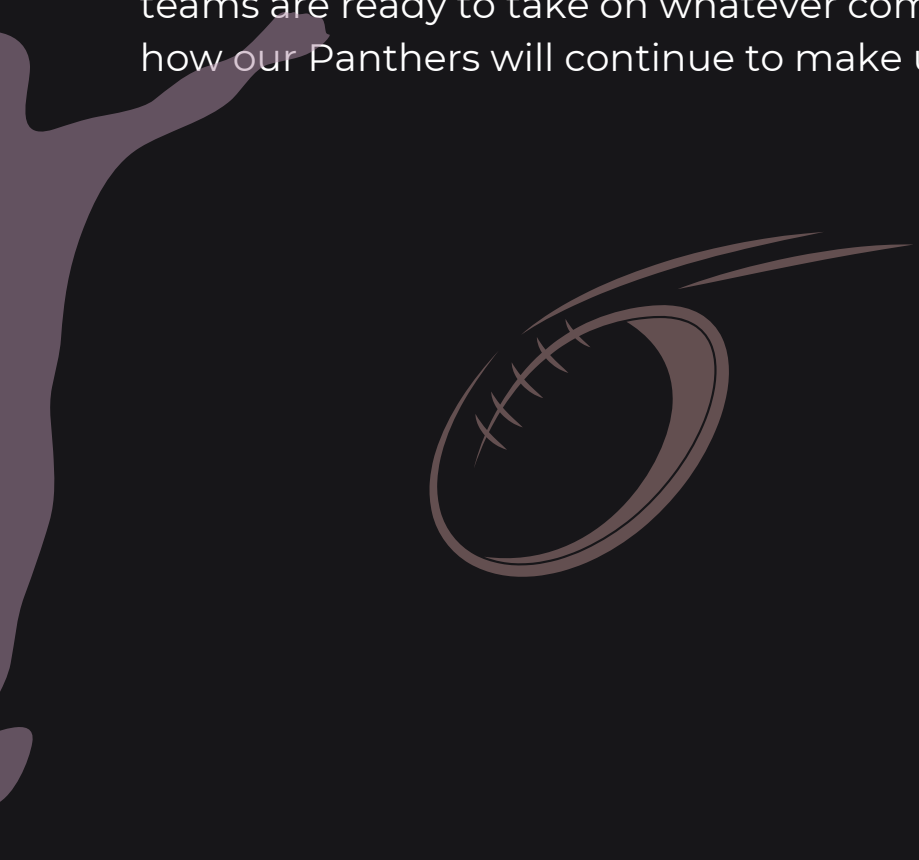
The Junior Boys' Cross-Country team has thrived, winning first in the North region at the regional meet on October 17th. With the City Championships on October 24th, the team aims to finish in the top two and advance to OFSAA in Ottawa. Coach Wood has praised the athletes for their commitment to achieving personal bests despite the short season.

Fast and Furious 7s: Rugby 7s

The Junior Boys Rugby team, led by standout player Tobi Oladimeji, faced a challenging season with a record of one win and four losses. The Senior Boys, led by key players like Hovanes Ettibaryan, Angjelo Kola, and Leo Chen, finished with five wins and four losses. The Varsity Girls wrapped up at six wins and six losses, placing 4th in the TDSB. The Senior Boys and Varsity Girls met their goal of reaching cities and winning at least one game. All teams practiced twice weekly for two hours, working hard to achieve their goals and dreams.

Rising Together: Our Panthers Season in Review

The commitment of our student-athletes and coaches has shone through in every game and event. With new challenges ahead, Victoria Park's teams are ready to take on whatever comes next. We can't wait to see how our Panthers will continue to make us proud. Go Panthers!



Athlete Highlight of the Month

By Gloria Chen

Panther Press is excited to introduce the **Athlete Highlight of the Month** to our newspaper this October! With such an abundance of talent at VPCI, we want to spotlight some of our exceptional students. This month, our featured athlete is Angjelo Kola, a twelfth-grader on the volleyball and rugby teams.

Photo Credit: Daniel Delos Reyes

Gloria Chen: What led you to join the volleyball team?

Angjelo Kola: I've always played volleyball with my family and friends, so I decided to try out for fun. I've never gotten formal training for it, so I didn't think I would make the team. I even told [my coach] that I could play on the practice team, but he ended up playing me as a left-side hitter.

GC: What led you to join the volleyball team?

AK: I've always played volleyball with my family and friends, so I decided to try out for fun. I've never gotten formal training for it, so I didn't think I would make the team. I even told [my coach] that I could play on the practice team, but he ended up playing me as a left-side hitter.

Photo Credit: Daniel Delos Reyes

GC: What do you love most about being on the volleyball team?

AK: I love the people. I know everyone on the team; we're all friends, and we've grown together as a team. It feels like a family. Volleyball itself feels like more than just a sport – you wake up, you train with the same guys; it's a fun atmosphere. I feel excited to go to practice.

GC: What do you think is your most notable athletic achievement?

AK: I think my biggest achievement was building a community – a team – from scratch with my teammate Mehdi. He has always been around, supported, and tried to help build the team. For some context, since tenth grade, I've been part of the Rugby 7's team. I remember our first season being terrible: we went in and had four losses and one tie. In our second season, we improved a lot and made a repechage. In my final year of 7s, we made it to the semi-finals for Tier 1 Rugby, the first time a senior team had done that. Most schools have really competitive players, so it was a significant achievement.

GC: What is your most significant strength in being an athlete?

AK: I can commit to something. No matter what sports team I join, I'm always very passionate about it and strive to make success possible. Regardless of whether our team is performing well, I adopt a mentality of "We're the best team in the league" to power through. I'm also always encouraging, so no matter how good the other team is, I'll say that we can do better. Overall, my mentality and commitment are my biggest strengths.

Club Highlight: *In Person Debate*

By Alina Chen

When it comes to clubs, VP has plenty of options that are suitable for everyone. This month's club highlight focused on the in-person British Parliamentary debate hosted by our VP Debate club!

So, why the in-person debate? Well, we've got the answer straight from the source! Debate co-president Sarah Wang says, "With Halloween right around the corner, we were hoping to improve the spirit with a celebration with more community engagement! Especially with virtual meetings, we felt that this would be a great way for debaters to interact with one another."

Now for the actual debate! This meeting focused on the motion: **This House Would tackle the kid.**

Confused? Don't worry, so were we. The info slide (background information as necessary for the debate) reads as follows:

> You are the strong safety for the Cleveland Browns, the worst team in the history of football. You have played for them for your entire 15 year career and have decided at the beginning of the year that regardless of the results, you would retire at the end of the year. You were born and raised in Cleveland and are the pride of the city. There are 3 religious institutions named after you, a Church, Synagogue, and a Mosque and 4 schools named after you. You are the reason LeBron came back. YOU ARE CLEVELAND.

Debaters present:

Opening Government
Alina
Matthew

Opening Opposition
Saqib
Brady

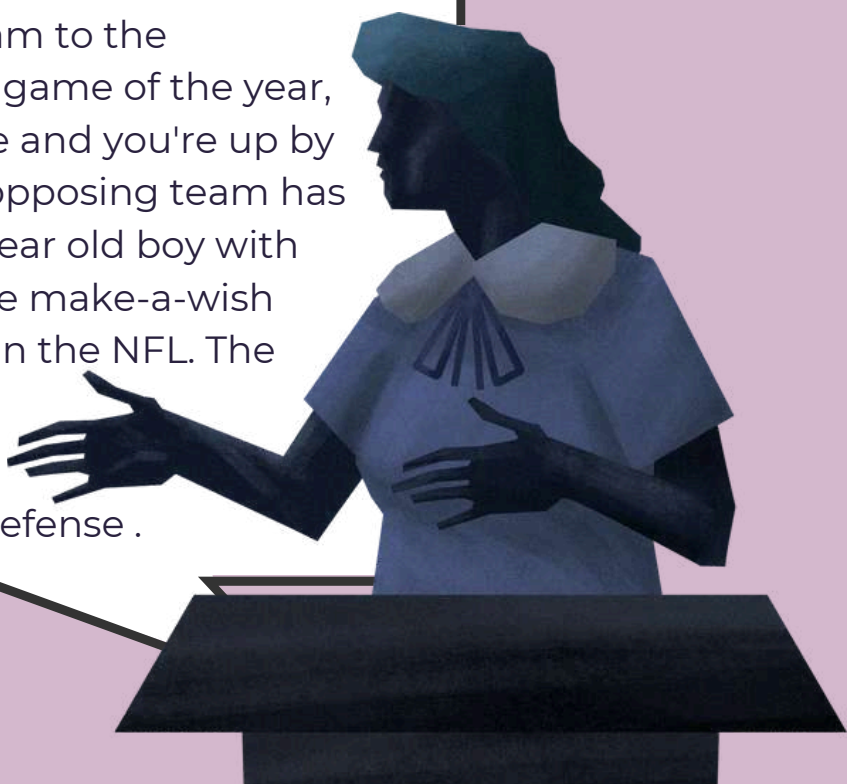
Closing Government
Percy
Nolan

Closing Opposition
Ivy
Karshan

It was a very insightful and exciting debate; every team gave their best effort. The main arguments on the Proposition side were regarding the integrity of football and the loyalty and respect of Cleveland citizens. At the same time, the Opposition debaters came up with very convincing arguments on personal and moral fulfillment and discussed how winning isn't always that important. In the end, there were no winners because, according to debate co-president Alisa Chen, "everyone's a winner!"

Overall, the event was very successful and engaging. Prizes included a VP Debate water bottle raffle, candy (for Halloween), and stickers! Spectators and debaters alike enjoyed the experience. It was a very exciting event here at VP, and we can't wait for next month's club highlight!

> That cannot be understated in this debate. Somehow you've carried the team to the Superbowl, the most important game of the year, and it's the last play of the game and you're up by 5 (a touchdown is worth 6) the opposing team has the ball and substitutes on a 6 year old boy with leukemia at running back whose make-a-wish dream is to score a touchdown in the NFL. The play begins and the kid has the ball, everyone has let him through. You're the last line of defense .



Infoslide pt.2

[ask tori]

[what does tori stand for ? Is this in anyway related to S. Torrie of the science department?]

Tori: My name doesn't stand for anything, and I'm not related to Ms. Torrie in any way! I was named after our school, "Vic-Tori-a Park."! I'm here to answer any questions you may have! From friends to education, feel free to ask anything you want an answer to, the form is on Panther Press's Instagram bio!

Photo Credit: Michael Luo

[How do I memorise everything I learn?]

Tori: Memorisation is very essential when it comes to learning, but there are ways to make it easier. One, is to consistently review the information you need memorised - memorisation doesn't (usually) happen overnight! Make sure to apply the information so that it will stick more easily. Or, as an easier alternative, be born with photographic memory!

[WHY ARE THE WASHROOMS CLOSED?]

Dear Viewer, the washrooms in this school are closed because of harassment of school properties, if we want more open washrooms we need to become more respectful of school property!

Try to appeal to a wider variety of people, such as people who don't fit into your club's initial target audience; perhaps there's people newly learning how to bike?

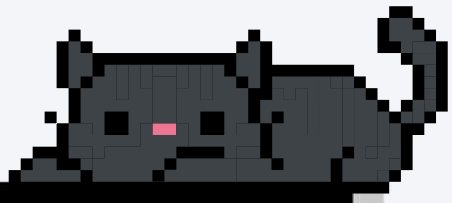
[how to make bigger biking club 😔]

[how do i know if my crush likes me back]

Tori: Knowing if your crush likes you back is a big part of forming a relationship, but instead of looking at what they say to you, or how they act around you, or whatever indicators you were told, just ask them directly! There is no good in waiting, if your end goal is to be with them. If you're holding back because you're scared of the consequences of feeling rejection, there is no better way to not feel scared of rejection than to get used to it, which means asking them out, and surviving after you do. However if you're friends with this person and don't want to risk the relationship, then still, asking them sounds like a bad move, but you're building lifetime regrets by doing this and you don't want to be asking yourself: "what if? " in 20 years. Plus, you're risking a couple awkward days in exchange for possibly years of happiness. Live in the moment, pursue happiness.

[How do I pass English]

Tori: Passing English is easy for some but harder for most. English can be easy to pass if you have the right resources and use those resources to their full extent! This means: talking to your teachers on how to improve, using their feedback to enhance your skills, and asking questions for times when you are confused!



[How to not procrastinate?]

Tori: In order to not procrastinate, break the task up into smaller more achievable tasks that can be done relatively quickly, this ensures you feel productive, making you feel more motivated to finish the whole thing. Also, try to have an organised and productive workspace, get rid of distractions between you and your end goal. Good luck!

THE 2024 US Presidential Election

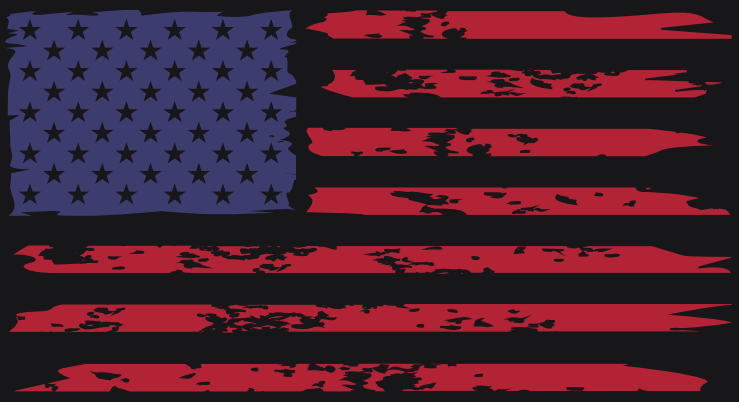
By: Jeffrey Zhao

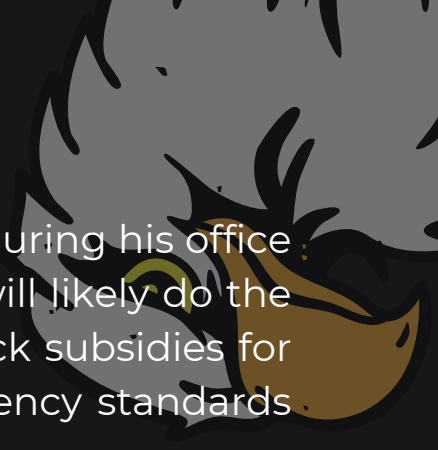
On November 5, 2024, the US election will take place. In this election, the two major candidates are Donald Trump of the Republican Party and Kamala Harris of the Democratic Party. Minor party and independent candidates, such as Jill Stein of the Green Party, Chase Oliver of the Libertarian Party and Cornel West, an independent, are also running but aren't expected to garner a significant portion of the vote. This year's election is quite significant, as the two candidates have drastically different visions for the US:

The economy

Trump supports reducing the corporate tax rate from 21% to 15%. He also wants to make his 2017 tax cuts permanent, which, among other provisions, doubled the estate tax exemption from $11 million to $22 million. One of his most significant proposals is to impose a 20% "tariff ring" around the US and taxing Chinese imports at 60%

In contrast, Harris plans to raise the corporate tax rate from 21% to 28% and the top marginal tax rate from 37% to 39.6% for those above $400,000 annually. Moreover, she has proposed reinstating the expanded child tax credit, giving a $6,000 tax credit to the parents of newborns.





Climate change

Trump rolled back many environmental regulations during his office and pulled out of the Paris Climate Agreement. He will likely do the same if he is elected. Moreover, he plans to scale back subsidies for green energy and electric vehicles and energy efficiency standards for appliances.

In contrast, Kamala will likely continue the path of the Biden administration, which passed the Inflation Reduction Act. This law provided billions of dollars in green energy incentives andpresided over record oil drilling.

Social policy

On the issue of abortion, Trump has claimed that he would veto any national abortion ban. Still, while he was president, he appointed three justices who voted in favour of repealing Roe v. Wade, which took away the right to an abortion in the US.

In contrast, Harris supports codifying Roe v. Wade into law and would likely appoint pro-choice justices.

Ultimately, the American electorate will have a big choice on November 6. No matter who wins, it is essential that the democratic process is respected and that there is a smooth transition to the next administration.

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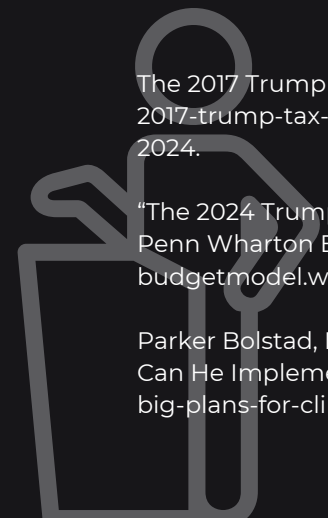


Interview with GAME DEV

By Jonathan Wan

A few weeks ago, our school's Ritvik Goyal created a new club for aspiring and dedicated designers, coders and artists. Game Dev Club is focused on creating games and utilizes all the aspects that come together to form a successful game, such as coding, story writing and music composition, to name a few. A few days ago, I sat down with Mr. Goyal to talk and ask questions about his new club to really get the inner scoop on some questions potential members may have.

Q1: Can you describe what type of members you are looking for?

"First and foremost, game development requires dedication," responded Ritvik. To Ritvik, you could be the greatest coder or artist in the world, but you still need the ability to show up to meet due dates or collaborate with others.

Q2: What goes into developing a game?

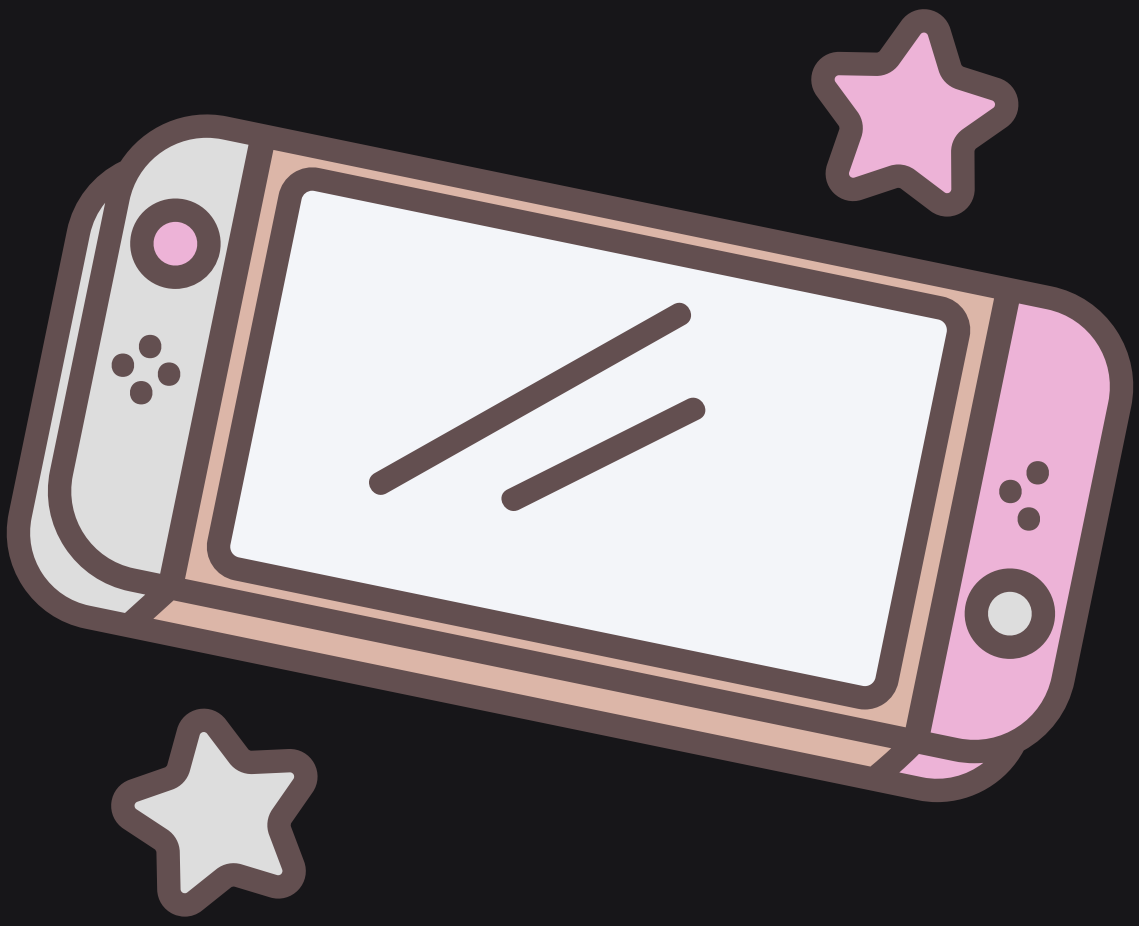
According to Mr. Goyal, game development is done in many steps, with the first step in creating a game being the outline. This involves the story writing element and the theme. Then comes "dialogue, character specifications, and all the details that define your game's world." After the groundwork is laid out, artists and programmers can finally get to work, creating the body of the work. Finally, if the game developers are feeling extra saucy, they can get a composer to add music. Once all is completed, the game can be tested and played.

Q3: What will be the goals for your club this year?

“We aim to train individuals with no prior experience and, by the end of the year, create a few games of our own!” exclaimed Ritvik. This jolly executive wants to train a small army of game developers with experience in the Godot engine. This small army can eventually work up to harder engines like Unity. His ultimate goal is to participate in exhibitions to show off the club’s work and learn from other game developers.

After my interview with Ritvik Goyal, it was evident that he is a dedicated and passionate club leader. On behalf of Panther Press, I truly wish him the best of luck in founding and running a new club at Victoria Park.

For more information, you can follow game dev at @vpgamedev.



Honouring Truth and Reconciliation Day: Why It Matters

By: Eshan Kiritharan

September 30th marks Truth and Reconciliation Day, a day in which Canadians reflect on the horrors inflicted upon Indigenous peoples across residential schools. Nationwide, government statements have been made condemning the practice. On this day, Victoria Park acknowledged the day by playing morning announcements that uncovered the testimonies of residential school survivors. On the day of and a few days before, the school announcements also gave facts about the significance and statistics of the Canadian residential school system.

Residential schooling began to assimilate Indigenous youth into European-origin Canadian society. Beginning in 1883, the federal government developed a system of residential schools that totalled 80 institutions at its peak. Within them, Indigenous children were isolated and removed from their homes. Their culture was scorned, and they were forbidden to speak or write in their mother tongue. Native children also received inadequate education and suffered malnutrition due to inadequate funding.

After the last residential school closed in 1996, numerous amendments were made to recognize, compensate for, and raise awareness for victims of the residential school system. In May 2013, Phyllis Webstad, a Northern Secwepemc woman, gave testimony on how, on September 30th, her orange shirt was stripped from her upon entering her school. She never saw the shirt again. From here, the orange shirt came as a representation of the fact that Indigenous children were forced into the cruelty of the schools for generations.

Today, millions of Canadians commemorate Orange Shirt Day each year, and the orange shirt has become a symbol of intergenerational trauma faced by Indigenous peoples. The day also plays a key role in modern Indigenous affairs by promoting cultural revitalization from colonization and holding the federal government accountable for acknowledging and reconciling historical injustices.

As the horrors of the residential school system in Canada are remembered, Truth and Reconciliation Day encourages dialogue about the ongoing impact of colonialism on Indigenous communities. It calls to acknowledge the intergenerational trauma inflicted on Indigenous communities and the challenges they face. By fostering national dialogue and education, the day helps to ensure that the legacy of residential schools is neither forgotten nor repeated, pushing society toward meaningful reconciliation and healing.

LEBRON JAMES:

DEFYING TIME & CHASING GLORY

in his 21st NBA season

By: William Song

Despite being 39 years old, LeBron James is denying Mother Nature herself. He is chasing glory in his 21st NBA season as he prepares to compete in the upcoming NBA season. This season promises to be historic, not just for LeBron but for the entire league, as he starts a new chapter that could alter both NBA history and his legacy.

In the upcoming season, LeBron James will make history as the first player in NBA history to play alongside his son, Bronny James, on the same team. This groundbreaking achievement highlights LeBron's incredible skill and dedication and speaks about his longevity and resilience. LeBron has openly expressed his dream of playing in the NBA with Bronny, and now, with Bronny's entry into the NBA, that dream is set to become a reality. This connection adds an emotional layer to the season, as fans eagerly anticipate watching the father and son duo take the court together to try to compete and win a championship.

LeBron's longevity and resilience are remarkable, especially in a league known for physically demanding physical demands. Entering his 21st season, he has consistently maintained peak performance levels, defying age and the odds.

His commitment to fitness and health has allowed him to compete at an elite level, even with new uprising stars. How he has adapted his game over the years—transitioning from a scorer to a versatile playmaker—shows his skill and understanding of the game. This adaptability sets him apart from his peers and competition as one of the greatest players of all time. Throughout his illustrious career, LeBron has amassed numerous milestones and achievements, from championships to MVP awards, all of which help build his legacy as the greatest player ever. He is the only player to record over 40,000 points, 10,000 rebounds, and 10,000 assists, showcasing his versatile skillset.

As the season unfolds, LeBron James continues to inspire countless fans, proving that age is merely a number. His journey through the NBA has been nothing short of extraordinary. With the promise of playing alongside his son, the upcoming season will surely be one of the most memorable years in his illustrious career. In the eyes of many, LeBron James is the best player of all time, and his legacy will undoubtedly endure for generations to come.

The Genocide of the 21st Century

By Alya Saad

Note: The catastrophe in Palestine and Lebanon is unfolding as the world watches the atrocities committed by Israel being streamed live on social media and reported by independent news channels. This article is to shed light on what should be in the headlines every day on every news channel, but it is not. All numbers in this article are accurate as of October 24, 2024.

The Gaza Strip of Palestine

At least 43,362 people, including nearly 16,765 children, have been killed by Israeli air strikes since October 7th, 2023, in Gaza, Palestine. More than 99,795 people were injured, and more than 10,000 are missing under the rubble. [1] "Overall, about 96% of the population faced high levels of acute food insecurity," an article from Reuters says. [2] Israel allows almost no aid or supplies to enter the Gaza Stripp. There are no operating schools in Gaza because many are in ruins, and the ones still standing are being used as shelters. There have been more than 370 attacks on health care in Gaza since October 7th. [3] Israel is using highly toxic white phosphorus bombs to create more damage and poison Gaza's underground water reserves. White phosphorus is considered internationally illegal to use on civilians - which is precisely what Israel is doing. [4] These people are innocent but are still occupied. Every day, kids in the region encounter experiences that are more traumatic than the day before.

The West Bank of Palestine

At least 759 people, including at least 165 children, have been killed by Israel, and more than 6,250 people injured in the west bank of Palestine. Israeli soldiers are consistently raiding the West Bank, arresting civilians. [1]

Civilians living in the West Bank of Palestine are being kicked out of their homes as settlers move in. Israel constantly raids the West Bank, shooting people and showing no mercy. The raids ended with Israeli soldiers throwing the bodies of their victims from rooftops.

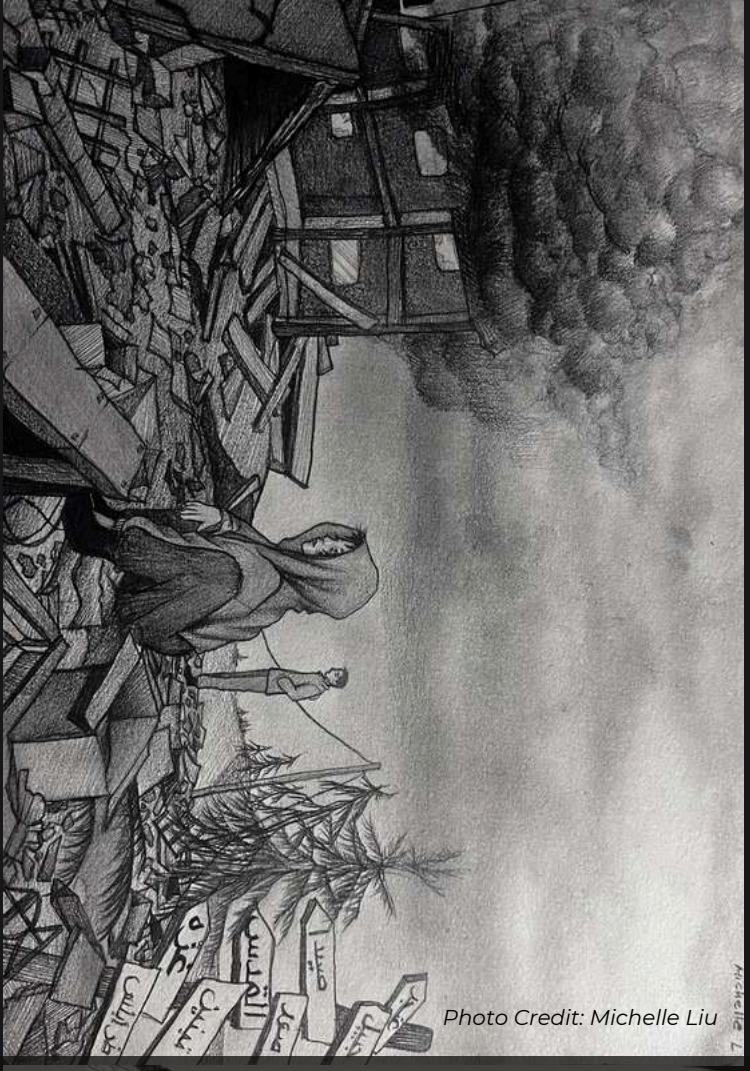


Photo Credit: Michelle Liu

Lebanon

Israeli missiles have killed at least 2,600 people in Lebanon and almost 10,000 wounded just since the beginning of Israel's strikes.[5] Every day, the children of Lebanon and Palestine wake up not knowing whether today will be the day they are dug up from the rubble to be put with the sky-high piles of the bodies of martyrs.

Kids are not going to school anymore for fear of getting bombed. In these buildings, those who have lost their homes stay.

Hospitals are in ruins, and ambulances are being bombed.

Her,e too, Israel is burning the cities and towns with white phosphorus bombs, terrorizing the country.

The War Enabler

The United States has given Israel a minimum of 20 billion dollars in weapons and military supplements since October 2023 [6][7], including fighter jets and missiles, to be used to end innocent lives in the Middle East.

This is not a war. It is a genocide; it is ethnic cleansing.

Sources

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[2] Reuters article about intense famine in Gaza https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/high-risk-famine-persists-across-gaza-global-hunger-monitor-says-2024-06-25/

[3] UNHCR article of peril in Gaza https://www.unhcr.org/news/speeches-and-statements/civilians-gaza-extreme-peril-while-world-watches-ten-requirements

[4] Al Jazeera article about white phosphorus and it's uses https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/10/13/what-is-the-white-phosphorus-that-israel-is-accused-of-using-on-gaza

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Book Fair

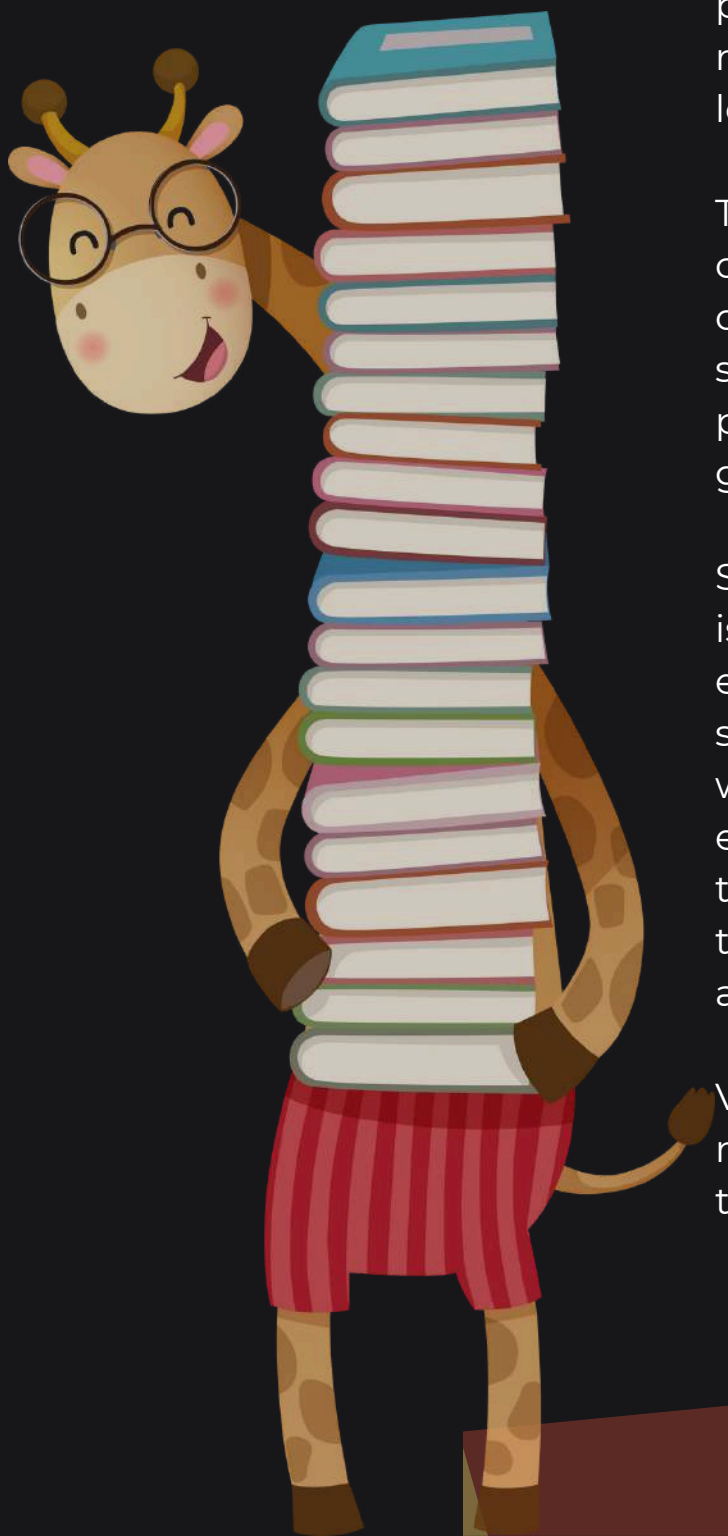
By Reena Yuan

VPCI's Book fair is an annual event hosted by Oxfam and the literature club. During this event, students can donate and purchase books from each other! The book fair is a great way to find new and interesting reads while also donating your old, unread books.

How would you like me to participate?

This year, VPCI's book fair was held at the library! It was open for the last 20 minutes of lunch, and students came to buy or donate books! There were books on shelves that you could look through, and if you saw a book that you found interesting, you could purchase it for just a dollar!

Now that you know about our book fair, you may wonder what makes it so attractive.? VP's book fair is excellent, mainly because of the cheapness of its books! Although the book fair's selection may not be significant, it's a great place to check out for a quick read! You can also guarantee that the proceeds are going to a good cause and can even benefit your school life. The book fair also helps reduce the paper waste caused by throwing out old books!



What's the purpose of VPCI's Book fair?

Many people do not have access to a proper education. For various reasons, they cannot read, write, or learn like the rest of us.

This may include women, who, in certain countries, are expected to cook and clean for the family. Many schools in these countries also do not provide a safe and sanitary place for girls to learn.

Some people also have financial issues. Only some are fortunate enough to be born into a financially stable family, and many people in the world do not have access to education the way we do. Oxfam and the VP want to change that. We hold the book fair every year to raise awareness about the less fortunate.

VPCI's book fair is just one of the many fantastic events hosted throughout the school year.

Autour et Autour du CARROUSEL DES CLUBS

Par: Monica Chen

Dans une tornade de corps, les élèves de Victoria Park sont absorbés par le carrousel des clubs. Les chefs vendent leurs clubs aux élèves, leurs voix étant transportées par les vents d'action. Je me trouve ici, dans l'œil d'un ouragan. C'est du chaos ordonné.

Mais nous ne sommes pas perdus. Grâce à Grace (haha) pour sa carte sur Instagram, les positions de chaque club sont claires.

Le carrousel des clubs est un événement annuel à Victoria Park pendant le déjeuner, où les élèves peuvent parler avec les chefs de chaque club et trouver une nouvelle chose à faire ici. Préparé par vos représentants en SLC et les chefs de vos clubs, l'effort est visible sur chaque planche à trois volets.

Quand vous arrivez, vous êtes salué par la musique tonnante du Music Council. L'environnement est éclatant, les gens sont tous prêts à faire n'importe quoi pour inciter les élèves à rejoindre leur club.

Je vois nos représentants dans SLC qui courent autour de la cafétéria en faisant les entretiens avec les autres. Il y a 39 clubs ici, tous avec des activités et des intérêts différents.

Dans un côté de la cafétéria, il y a les clubs pour améliorer vos compétences quand vous parlez en public, comme VP Debate et DECA. Dans un autre côté, les clubs qui se concentrent sur les sujets dans les sciences, comme HOSA et Science Club. Avec plusieurs autres clubs dans les autres matières, je suis fier de ce que cette école peut faire quand les élèves travaillent ensemble.

J'ai demandé à un élève en neuvième année son opinion sur le carrousel de clubs. En neuvième année, il est important de reconnaître toutes vos options et de trouver quelque chose de nouveau et quelque chose que vous aimez.

Elle a dit que c'est très utile et elle a appris toutes sortes de choses nouvelles. Mais, si elle pouvait changer quelque chose, elle voudrait voir plus d'élèves qui regardent les clubs et que, dans la cafétéria, la plupart des personnes sont des chefs de chaque club. J'ai vu ça aussi. Après le déluge de personnes dans les premières minutes, le nombre de personnes qui ne sont pas les chefs d'un club diminue.

En tout, le carrousel de clubs est une tradition à VP qui permet à tout le monde d'être plus en contact avec la communauté d'école et les autres. Le carrousel des clubs montre bien à quel point la diversité des intérêts est encouragée à Victoria Park. Chaque élève peut y trouver sa place et contribuer à la richesse de la communauté scolaire.

Best Idea Ever Had

By Zaina Khan

As I stare up at the ceiling tonight, I lie in anticipation. My eyes search through the inky black veil of darkness and set themselves on the ceiling. They run over the seemingly smooth surface and watch it expand across the top of my room. Although it's hard to see in the dark, if I peer hard enough, I can make out the little bumps that stick out, like light and gray mountains on the rough terrain of my ceiling. The more I stare at its shadowy appearance, the closer it seems to get, as if I could reach my hand out and scarcely graze it with the tips of my fingers.

I try not to focus too much on the softness of the bed or the warmth of my blanket but on that swelling ceiling looming over me, acting as a shield against all that may be lurking outside. Shifting into a comfortable position, I rummage through my mind for all my most recent memories or exciting circumstances. Then, as a bulb lights up above my head, I formulate an idea, just another average idea on another average night. I close my eyes and see the idea through, picturing every part of it, every scene, then quickly, I pick up the notepad and pencil on the tiny desk beside me and scribble.

The page soon fills with my ideas, and when I'm done, I close my eyes a final time and drift off to sleep.

The following day, I followed through with my routine; I did stretches after breakfast and met Mira at the library for our shift. I took one last look at the ceiling before I went, remembering to write another story to add to my collection of short stories stored on my computer, never to be published.

***

Somehow, my worn clothes end up on the floor again. I don't bother to pick them up and fold them once I'm in my pyjamas and lying underneath my blanket furs. As I snuggle, images of the library I work at course through my mind. I see Mira stacking shelves beside me; I see her sneaking glances at the pages of the books she's supposed to keep preserved for customers. I see the customers themselves making vague demands, needing to be satisfied with specificity. I see them skinning me alive with their gaze, already putting me in shackles and chains before their feet. I can't blush in front of them,; Ican only smile.

Background Credit: Frank Huang

All I've ever wanted is both before me and behind me; in placing myself right in the hub of my imagination, I've managed to intertwine myself with fiction and yet get trapped by reality again and again. And just as the masses lash out at me, my mind does nothing to atone for the losses I face in my body.

I surrendered myself to the darkness again and sank underneath it for what I thought would be a few hours of silence and solitude. But the colours that visited me that night seared themselves in my memory.

I wake up in the black of my room, still enveloped in shadow from the middle of the night, and I formulate my grandest idea until tomorrow.

***

I call in sick at the library and spend the day slouching on various chairs and sofas, scratching paper, tapping keys—whatever gets me forward. It's not a short story, but it's not a lengthy one. I don't finish it by the end of the day, but the idea creeps into my mind for months until the final word is written and the room is filled with silence again.

***

When my story is unleashed into the world, the hordes devour it. They barge into my life and demand more from me, which I'm willing to give. Soon, I see myself on the shelves I inhabit; I am plucked from among the spines and flaps and paid for at the cash register. I have stolen away and kept awake at night as my eyes interpret every word I have to show. They still want more of me.

***

I stifle a sigh as I plop down onto my bed and get ready to succumb to blank. Ten years of travelling the world through pages, and they demand more. They keep expecting me to get up from bed and give them what they want. I keep closing my eyes every night and waiting to see colour again. And I keep waking up knowing that I have not and never will. I close my eyes now and give myself what is now ten years and one day. But the paper, as always, remains blank.

Photo Credit: Sujay Golla

Flying with the Angels

By Alya Saad

I run, my feet pounding on the cobbled street, my short brown hair getting ruffled by the wind and soaked by the rain. My ears are filled with the loud sounds of explosions, ambulance sirens, cries of people, my heaving, and the rain. When was the last time it was silent here? It feels like I have never heard of peace in my life.

Another sound adds to the throbbing of my head. My baby sister, cradled in my arms, begins to cry louder. I hug her to my chest. “Just a little bit more, and we’ll be the, re,” I huff. Her cries grow louder, echoing in my skull. I feel like sobbing with her. She must be in pain. I stop, breathing hard. I have reached the hospital. My heart swells with relief, slowing its frantic hammering in my chest. Her crying fades, and she goes stiff. *Please let her only be sleeping.*

I push through the crowd inside, a sea of people with injuries of every kind. There are thousands of cuts and burns to the eyes and stomach, while almost all have bleeding hands.

I shove through, spotting a tall doctor walking toward a white door. I rush in front of him, blocking his path, and my eyes look up at him, pleading. “Sir, please check my sister. One… one of the explosions struck us.” He hesitates, looks to the door, then back to me, nods, and softly takes her from my trembling hands.

A series of expressions pass across his face when he looks at the hopefully sleeping baby. “Follow me,” he says. He turns and leads me through several doors. My mind races, replaying the moment he looked at her. Why did he seem so alarmed? Did he possibly think ththat
“Over here.” The doctor enters a white room. Why is the hospital so blindingly white? He puts my motionless sister down on a white bed and asks me to sit down on a white chair. “OK, boy, what’s your name?” he asks.

“Yusuf,” I sniff. “Is she hurt?” My only worry is my sister. The white sheet on the bed has started to get soaked with blood.

“How old are you?”

“Ten. Why is she not moving?”

Photo Credit: Michelle Liu

“Yusuf, where are your parents?” He sighs.

Frustration springs in my heart. Why is he not helping her? Why is he asking me so many questions?

“Just tell me if my sister is okay.” I pause and remember to be respectful, just like Mama taught me. “Please.”

His head tilts to the side, his hazel eyes filled with pity.

“She… she is flying with the angels, up in heaven,” he pauses.“We can keep her with us to bury, but I have to talk to your parents…” He continues,s but I do not understand a word. The sound of my heart beating faster and faster overwhelms his words. What does he mean by the angels? She is right; how can she be with an angel? My chest tightens as dread creeps in.

He is still blabbing. Rambling on like there is no problem in the world. He is a terrible doctor, I decide. He should be checking and inspecting her. He should have told me before. He should… No, he is wrong. I shake my head and get up. He is still talking as I pick my sister off the bed and dash through the door into the busy hospital.

I try to flee the truth, but the tall doctor grabs me by the shirt and ushers me into his office.

It’s not your fault, you know. She’s in a better place now.” he whispers.

I cry rivers until my eyes feel empty and my chest aches.

****

It is funny how excited I was for Halloween this year. That had been my only thought while walking with my family before the building beside us exploded, sending debris all around. I was daydreaming about how our French teacher, who seemed to love this time of year, would wear a costume and try to scare us. She would give us all the treats and show us a horror movie. Those were the times I made the best memories in school. What a silly thought since they have closed school anyway, using the buildings as shelters.

We do not have to watch horror movies this Halloween to be horrified. Because now, the horror is absolute. The horror of waking up to fighter jets and eating breakfast to the sound of missiles zooming down and exploding. The horror of thinking that we might just be next to be found in the ruins and put among the never-ending bodies of martyrs.

The only difference from Halloween is that we are not afraid. No matter how many jets they fly over us, houses they bomb, or children they kill. They do not scare us because they have hell getting ready for them. Us martyrs, we go to heaven. Even if we die, we know that the resistance has not. The resistance pumps through all our veins every second of every day. For that, we are not scared of dying, and we, at any cost, will keep our heads high and our legs walking down the right path.

by Michelle Liu

Accompanied Piece:
Flying With the Angels
by Alya Saad

Cast No Shadow

by Jonathan Wan

A cold memo from the chief I read,
My face turned blue, the note pricks me,
As contents ruptured, ulcers in deep,
Only pleasantries, though it did speak,

Of how dark soot will nourish the ground,
That strange fruit will bear from the trees,
Like heaven, though no virtues around,
Live presents sent to hotels as treats,

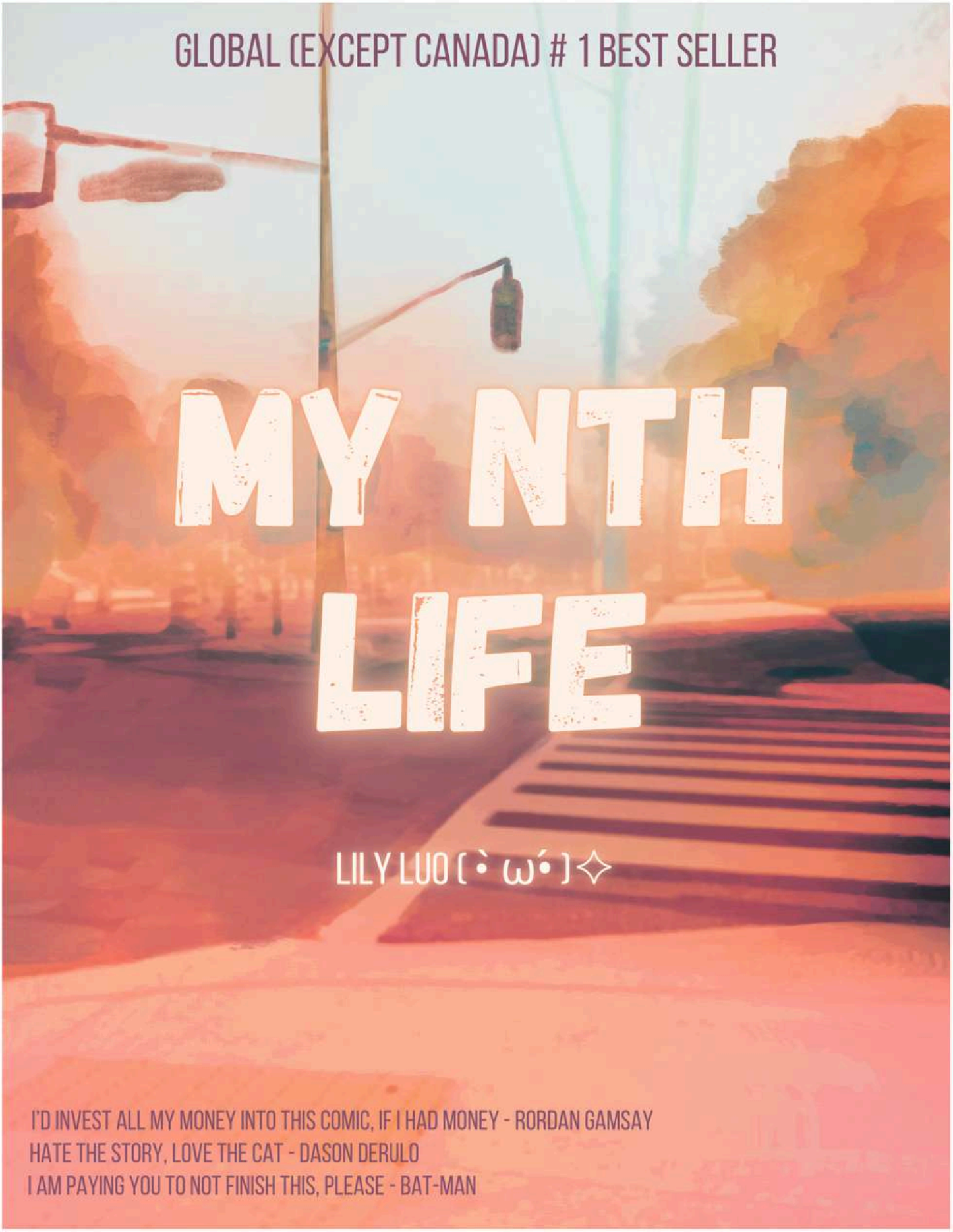
So me and, many others would leave,
Krampus leaves a surprise on the Eve,
Soldiers execute the hope of peace,
Satan guides, coming for souls to retrieve,

Now the town burns; homes are now lit
And to the men, we shot all fit,
Women, seniors. Buried in pits,
And to the kids, Santa Claus is slit,

And looking at myself, it’s hard to admit,
As the flesh burns, the skeletons retain,
As flickers die, the reflections remain,
But I cast no shadow.

Cat Comic: My Nth Life

By: Lily Luo (ვ˙ᗜ˙)


GLOBAL (EXCEPT CANADA) # 1 BEST SELLER
MY NTH LIFE
LILY LUO (｀ω´)✧
I'D INVEST ALL MY MONEY INTO THIS COMIC, IF I HAD MONEY - RORDAN GAMSAY
HATE THE STORY, LOVE THE CAT - DASON DERULO
I AM PAYING YOU TO NOT FINISH THIS, PLEASE - BAT-MAN

Wow she's so lazy, must be living good huh...
Real. Let's all be cats in our next lives, alright?

What a simplistic dream.
Actually nah, I'd want to be a fish
With your memory, you already are.
But who am I to judge?

I too, want more than this life.

I've had enough of lazing around outside, doing nothing but thinking about the taste of caviar.

If I could have one wish.

If I could have one wish.

One wish granted for my next life,

wish granted for my next life,

I'd want to be a human.

I'd want to be a cat.

Which leads to my biggest problem yet.

I'M GOING

TO DIE.

Now that the exposition is over, what's next?

(The next chapter will be longer, I just needed to set up a little bit first)
Find out in issue 2, coming out in December

My Nth Life will be a year long comic run, please come back.
-Lily ꒰ ˘̩̩̩▫˘̩̩̩)▫

Is It Truly Ignorance?

by Spruha Karanjkar

Soft hues of green
are what my home is.
Once plentiful and lively,
it is now just barren fizz.

Pause, deep breath.
Unwelcome smoke cuts through,
with it, the promise of death.
I remember the sky being blue.

Arms feeling light,
remorsefully, I look down.
Millions who resided on me
knew I wasn’t as safe as town.

Leaves malnourished,
overthinking the unseen.
Grief turns into dread
as I hear my neighbours scream.

there they are.
The Murderers.
Who took away
What really mattered
to me, to them, and all.
It’s You.

But how will I run?
My roots bind me.
You are supposed to be my voice.
Why not help me?
I've given my all,
all, for your benefit.
And what's my reward?
Nothing but pain.

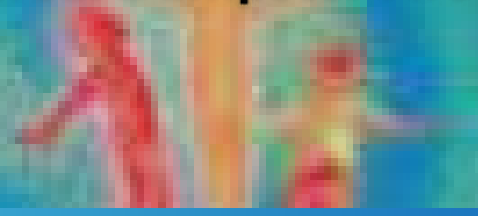
Don't you see?
I'm part of the solution
of a problem you have created,
How can so many be so ignorant?

But alas, I am only a tree.
And I will never be free.

And so I watch with silence.
As you drop your cigarette-
Still lit.
And walk away unbothered.d
Because who really cares
If a small forest burned down?
The earth already is.

Donda – Kanye West

"An Ethereal Dumpster Fire"



By: Jonathan Wan

Donda is a black horse in Kanye's discography. Like, Kanye has eras. You have his early works, like *College Dropout* and *Late Registration*, with unlimited ambition and a nostalgic, chipmunk soul sound. Then, you have his blockbuster LPs, like *Graduation*, *Dark Fantasy,* and even *Life of Pablo,* to an extent. He has introspective albums like *Ye* and *808s*. And who can forget the nincompoopish *Vulture* series? Of course, he has anomalies, such as *Jesus is King* and the innovative *Yeezus*, but *Donda* is different. It's indescribable. It's an indescribable album. I can say that *Yeezus* is Kanye's electronic, industrial ego trip through fame and that *Jesus is King* is Kanye's gospel album. But what in the world is *Donda*? Is it a tribute to his mom? A story about his divorce? An album about God? It's also an inconsistent album, but not in a terrible way. The highs on this album could be some all-time classics in a few years, but there's still much filler and half-cooked songs along the way.

The album starts with the chanting of *Donda*, followed by the first actual song, *Jail*. The booming instrumentals are reminiscent of *Yeezus*, yet Kanye's energy feels blunted from the autotune. Jay-Z's verse, however, feels incredibly underwhelming. Jay-Z should be a 25-year, seasoned veteran of rap, yet this 50-year-old calls a jail cell a "celly." His verse euthanizes the song, and the slow tempo does not favour the song. It's like *Yeezus* for dummies: *Black Skinhead* at bedtime. *God Breathed* makes no sense. If *Jail* is *Yeezus* for dummies, *God Breathed* is *Yeezus* for fetuses. The song has a *Yeezus*-esque, industrial/electronic rap instrumental, yet it has no hook or wit and runs for a gruelling 5 minutes.

Following *God Breathed* is an absolute banger, *Off the Grid*. It has a solid beat, chorus, and Carti and Fivio features. Kanye has been able to keep up with the energy of two people for over 20 years. His junior is something to be applauded. The following two songs are the LP's most significant, *Hurricane* and *Praise God*, and for good reason. *Hurricane* has a decent verse from Lil Baby but stunning vocals by the Weeknd, and the chorus is ethereal. The moment when the Weeknd's reverbed vocals ask God to hold him close, only for the choir to enter, blew me out of the water. Now that is peak Kanye songwriting: excellent production with features from far more talented people than he is. Kanye's own verse is not peak, which is passable at best and corny at worst. In recent memory, Kanye lands one of his best flows while rapping the chorus on *Praise God* over a probustchoir sample. Avis Scott has solid features, but Baby Keem's verse is unfocused and dull.

Jonah and *Ok Ok* are equally forgettable. *Jonah* has a sweet chorus, and *Ok Ok* improves on this with a solid beat. However, both have pretty forgettable verses and features. *Junya* has Kanye doing a Carti impression for two minutes. It gets repetitive after the first minute. But *Whole Lotta Red*-era PlayboiCarti is still pretty enjoyable, and at least Kanye seems to be having fun with his ad-libs. *Believe What I Say* has one of the best samples Kanye has ever produced, interpolating *Lauryn Hill,* like back on the classic *All Falls Down*. The beat carries the verse from Kanye, and the random spoken word near the end of the song could get a bit weird, but overall, it's still a good song. *24* carries Jonah's spiritual sweetness but focuses on the song's message through choral vocals. In this effort, Kanye finds more success than in *Jonah*, as the song feels like more of a sincere effort. *Remote control* works for around a minute, but its repetitive nature bores after the minute mark is surpassed. In the end, *Remote Control* sounds like more filler on an album that reaches almost 2 hours.

For such a long, detailed, and bloated album as Donda, it deserves an equally long, detailed, and bloated album review. Therefore, this review will be a two-parter, with one-half of the album discussed this month and another half discussed next.

The Summer
A FILM REVIEW

By Krishnapriya Nagasubranian

Summer is evocative; it speaks to many people about freedom of love. As the school year continues, I long for summer to come back. 'The Summer' was released in 2023 for the Seoul Indie-Anifest, directed by Han Ji-won, a talented and fresh animator and illustrator. I didn't expect much, only for nostalgia, but Han Ji-won uses her artistry to touch on the fragile love that forms in high school and how it changes over the years.

So, what makes this film so unique? It sounds like any other teen romance. Well, to begin with, the animation is beautiful. The backgrounds are finely detailed, and the lighting makes every scene feel important, setting a tone and mood that is hard to forget. For example, when Lee-Kyeong and Soo-I spend time together in high school, they are painted in light golds and greens to signify the freshness of summer. As they start to drift apart, it becomes duller. No matter the time of the day, each detail is painted in a way that immerses you in the story completely.

Apart from the stunning animation, the characters themselves make the film enjoyable. Lee-Kyeong and Soo-I are messy and childish in their ways. They have flaws, and while they aren't perfect, they also have traits that allow the watcher to sympathize and root for them. For example, when Soo-I loses her ability to play soccer, she gets stuck in her past failures and finds it challenging to move forward. It's her relationship with Lee-Kyeong that lets her move on and grow. For Lee-Kyeong, the nostalgia of her high-school summers holds her hostage and stops her from understanding herself, but she eventually learns.

Of course, a great film is only complete with an original take on the story. As all love stories go, most couples are bound to find each other at the end. In this one, they are not so lucky. Soo-I and Lee-Kyeong part ways, but their experiences together aren't dulled. If anything, they shine brighter.

Additionally, the way they're portrayed as a lesbian couple is refreshing. Most coming-of-age films like this focus on how other people treat them, but Han Ji-Won manages to depict their love like any other love. There is more to them than how others view or treat them. It's focused on their stories and their own identities.

In conclusion, 'The Summer' is excellent in every turn, from its animation to the story and to the way their story is expressed. Despite being only 60 minutes, every scene is treated with care and delicacy, leaving an everlasting impression on the viewer. For me, summer is something I love, but maybe I should start to move on and focus on newer things in life. The movie, though, can stay!

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The Psychology of Fear

Why We Like Horror Movies & Haunted Houses

By: Nolan Wu

With Halloween around the corner, my friends can't wait to jump into the world of horror. On the other hand, I would enjoy Halloween more without scares and macabre, only candies, costumes, and the festival atmosphere. Why do some of us love horror movies and haunted houses? My research scan reveals exciting findings.

Why Is It Possible To Enjoy Horror?

Terrifying acts trigger a "fight or flight" response in our brain, releasing adrenaline. This hormone increases heart rate, breathing, and energy to prepare the body to react to danger. But the brain quickly catches up, realizing that the horror is fictional and is not life-threatening. This allows the brain to relax, releasing dopamine, a hormone that gives us pleasure. This terror-to-excitement switch relies on three things: a sense of safety (i.e., knowing the scary entity can't hurt us), psychological detachment (i.e., reminding ourselves that the horror isn't absolute), and a sense of control (i.e., feeling confident that we can manage the dangers we encounter). The absence of any of these factors reduces enjoyment. This explains why some of us like horror more than others.

Who Is More Likely To Enjoy Horror?

Research shows that people prone to sensation seeking, are more open to new experiences, and are less empathetic tend to enjoy horror more. Also, younger people and men are more drawn to horror than older people and women. Additionally, people from countries with a higher per capita GDP appreciate horror more than those from poorer countries. This is because financial security gives a strong sense of control, making it easier to derive pleasure from horror.

Are All Horror Consumers Thrill Seekers?

The Journal of Media Psychology found that while some participate in this activity for sensation, others participate for different reasons. Some are scared to death but want to push their boundaries and test their limits. Others use it as a coping mechanism to deal with stress, anxiety, and fear in life. Facing terror in a fictional world helps them work through their dark feelings. For example, while watching It, we fought Pennywise with the kids and faced their deepest fears with them. Meanwhile, we confronted our own anxiety and childhood traumas and gained a sense of empowerment when the kids triumphed in the end.

After all this research, I'm considering joining my friends for a horror movie this Halloween, with a stash of Doritos for moral support.

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Is Happiness a Privilege?

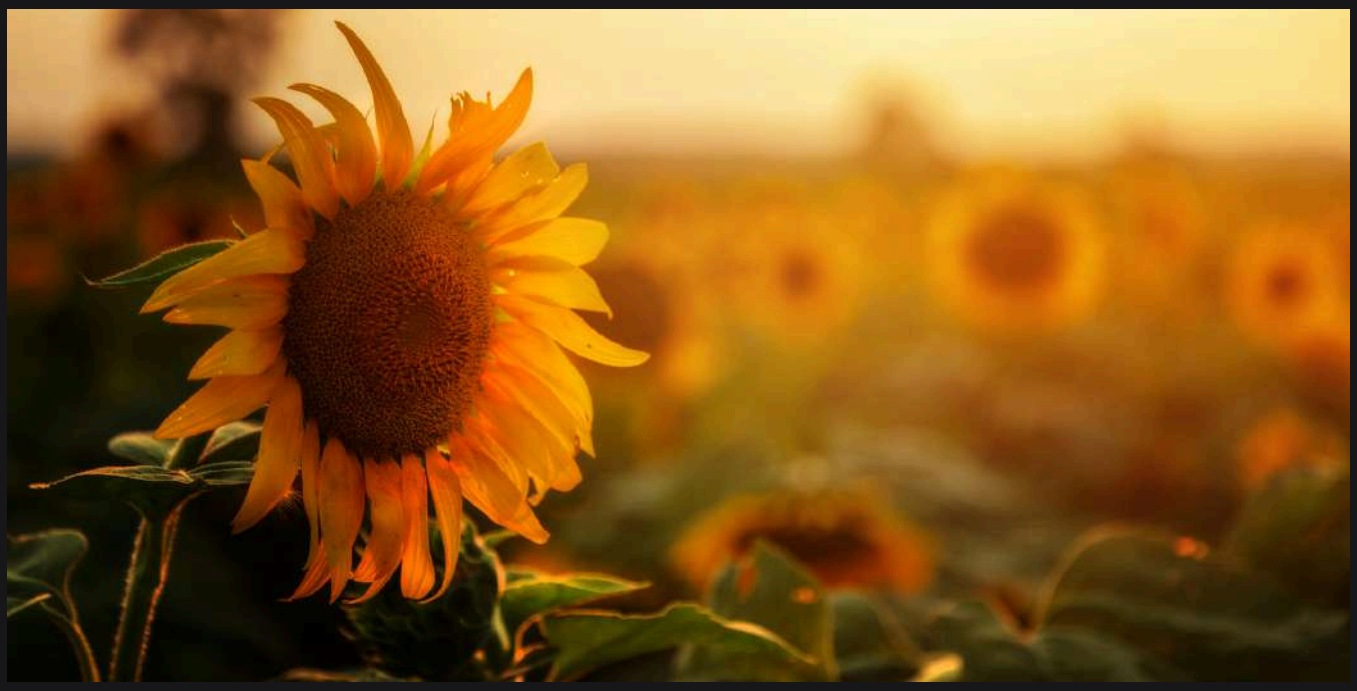
By: Aksh Kumar

Trigger Warning: Contains mentions of suicide.

"Happiness is a choice" is a phrase you have almost definitely heard at some point. People say that circumstances should not determine your happiness or that material possessions can not make you happy, but a positive mindset can. But, can you tell the starving man pleading for food beside the Walmart or the 62-year-old woman with chronic pain that they should choose to be happy? Can we realize that happiness is a choice and not a privilege?

As defined by the Oxford Dictionary, a choice is "an act of selecting or making a decision when faced with two or more possibilities." Considering this definition, can happiness be considered a choice if, sometimes, happiness isn't even an option? For example, according to the Cleveland Clinic, anhedonia is the inability to feel joy or pleasure. This is a symptom of numerous mental health disorders, notably depression. Someone who is depressed can have moments of joy, as it varies from person to person. However, a person with severe depression may struggle to stay alive and do daily tasks such as brushing teeth or getting out of bed, let alone worry about being happy. For such people, happiness is not a considered option when it is a battle between succumbing to suicidal ideations and surviving daily life. However, even in milder cases, people are joyous to see the next day.

Social class is A significant factor affecting the ability to "choose" to be happy. It is expected that "happiness is a choice" in conjunction with "it isn't about material possessions, but your mindset." In my opinion,



However, this ideology that money cannot impact the ability to be happy seems silly and unrealistic.

Social class is heavily interlinked with mental health. Those in the lower class are more likely to be depressed due to both objective and subjective reasons, as concluded by an article from the National Institutes of Health. Subjective socioeconomic status refers to your perception of your social class relative to others. Those who view themselves in a higher position can navigate their lives more efficiently with a mindset that they can control their surroundings. In contrast, those who view themselves as being in a lower position tend to be apprehensive and believe that they are less valued. On the other hand, an objective social class refers to factors such as income, education, and occupation. Of course, it is harder to be happy when you cannot afford to be alive.

Contentment often appears as something everyone should eventually achieve and is perceived as the norm. Yet, many live surrounded by ideas of what a “normal,” happy life would look like without mental impairments. Happiness is not a choice for all but often a privilege, as it cannot be forced.

The Gig Economy: pros & CONS

by Alisa Chen

“A gig economy, also known as the sharing economy or access economy, relies heavily on temporary and part-time positions filled by independent contractors and freelancers rather than full-time permanent employees.” - Investopedia.

The gig economy boomed during COVID-19 when people were forced to work from home and shop online. It has risen in popularity since then. The gig economy workers have been self-employed since Dom. They choose their own hours (e.g., dog hours), workplace (e.g., free software development at home), and whether or not the job is a side hustle. The gig economy is cool and all, but there are problems—many of them.

Considering things logically, many gig economy workers are small business owners. That’s many logistics, scheduling, and a rational fear of losing the job. Picture getting a comp sci degree at UofT. Upon graduating, instead of securing a job, you’re frantically throwing graphic design elements onto Canva and figuring out how to crop a photo of your face to minimize ugliness (definitely not your expertise). You must take a marketing course because the designs you posted on fiverr.com to market yourself aren’t working. You’re going into more debt, you’ve stopped showering, you’re trying to kickstart commissions to no avail, you’re forgetting to spend time with your girlfriend, you’re...

TL;DR: Juggling those tasks can result in a terrible work-life balance. Managing logistical issues (and just about everything else) is not everyone’s strength.

Let's say it is. Then, the individual has to deal with not having paid holiday or sick leave. Emergencies happen to everyone. Well, for many gig economy participants, it's crucial that they must happen a lot less; there's no backup plan. If you break your back and stop mowing lawns for a month, a lot of angry rich people will have the cancel service number on speed dial. What's worse, you might not even have health insurance (this is especially the case with independent contractors). Workers rights where?

The next hurdle is wages. Gig economy workers are much more prone to be impacted by changes in supply and demand. It's absurdly easy for little modern artist Timmy to get overshadowed by modern artist Dimmy (a make-believe Kardashian), even if they're slapping the same purple circles onto the same blank canvases. If 100-mil-followers-on-ig Dimmy was copying 10-followers-on-ig Timmy, is Timmy really in much of a position to speak out and be heard? Correct. Gig economy workers rarely have bargaining power. That's the same reason why Uber, DoorDash, Grubhub, and other companies can magically brush off criticisms for their low wages.

Overall, the gig economy has many flaws, but so does a lot of money... granted, the business is successful. Maybe it's not such a bad idea to partake in it. Yay for the gig economy, I guess.

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Why Do We *Still* Use CHALK?

By: Subu Bhattarai

Picture walking into a classroom and seeing a well-used blackboard; you might visualize important upcoming dates, traces of old notes, and, most noticeably, the vast amount of **dust** that seems to have settled on every surface.

One of the most significant disadvantages of using chalk is that it is very messy. Everything in the close vicinity of the board is covered in chalk dust. If you accidentally brush up against a surface around the board, your clothes, hands, and backpack will become powdery. Additionally, chalk dust can harm individuals with respiratory illnesses, as the dust can irritate the lungs when inhaled, triggering allergies and asthma attacks.

Lastly, another major disadvantage of chalk is that it is fragile and challenging to work with. Chalk, especially those of a lower quality, could be more visible. Therefore, the writer must apply more pressure to make letters more straightforward. However, too much pressure can easily break the chalk, interrupting the lesson. While some broken-off pieces can still be used, most need to be more extensive and accessible to write with, causing the amount of chalk-related waste to add up.

Despite the many flaws with chalk, it is still the preferred teaching method because of one main reason: chalk is reliable. Several alternatives for chalk, such as whiteboards or projection devices, can have many related problems. For example, markers may have dried out because they were uncapped, or the projector might need to be fixed. With chal, however, everything can go smoothly; only the chalk and board have to be there. In the end, teachers prefer having a dependable and simple tool that is straightforward, though it may be messy and old-fashioned.

VP LIT PRESENTS

HALLOWEEN

SHORT STORY CONTEST WINNING SUBMISSIONS

1 **The Last Lantern**
By Behishta Hamidi

2 **Carcass in a Cage**
By Ayaa Al-Sultany

3 **Halloween Nights**
By Farahnaz Hamidi

BY; BEHISHTA HAMIDI

THE LAST LANTERN

"SOME FLAMES SHOULD NEVER BE LIT....."

SHORT STORY BY

BEHISHTA HAMIDI

The night air was crisp, carrying the faint scent of decaying leaves, and the streets were emptier than Emily had ever seen on Halloween. Her footsteps echoed through the quiet neighbourhood, the rhythmic crunch of leaves underfoot somehow unnerving. Why is it so quiet? she thought as her fingers clenched tighter around the handle of her flickering lantern. A shiver ran up her spine as the flame inside it sputtered weakly against the growing darkness.
Something wasn't right.

Emily was never one to scare easily—she loved Halloween, the thrill of the night, the playful scares—but tonight felt different. There were no children laughing, no costumes swishing down the streets, no candy-filled bags swinging from eager hands. The absence of sound gnawed at her, making the silence feel alive, almost predatory.
Just a few more houses, she urged herself, trying to shake off the growing dread. The next block lay ahead, eerily still, as though frozen in time.

A sudden clang broke the silence. Emily stopped dead in her tracks. Her heart skipped a beat. She turned slowly, scanning the area. Nothing. Just the cold wind and the rustling of skeletal branches. It's just the wind, she told herself, forcing her feet to keep moving. She tried to distract herself by thinking about the night ahead, of reaching the safety of her home. But the further she walked, the heavier the air seemed to become, pressing down on her until every breath felt like a struggle.

A soft whisper drifted through the air. "Go home."
Emily spun around, her breath catching in her throat. The street was empty. No one was there. She shook her head. I'm hearing things, she thought, forcing a nervous laugh. She quickened her pace, her lantern swaying by her side, the dim flame offering little comfort.

She passed by houses, each darker and more unfamiliar than the last.

As she turned onto a deserted cul-de-sac, something caught her eye—a single house at the end of the street, its windows glowing with an eerie orange light.

That house wasn't here before, Emily thought. She knew this street like the back of her hand. But now, it seems... different. The lantern in her hand flickered as though warning her to turn back. But her feet, as if pulled by some unseen force, carried her toward the house.

The door creaked open as she stepped onto the porch, revealing a dimly lit interior. Hesitation washed over her. I should go home, she thought, her heart hammering in her chest. But before she could turn to leave, a voice whispered from within.

"Come in, Emily."

Her legs moved of their own accord, and she stepped inside.

The air in the house was thick with an old, musty scent, the kind that made you think of forgotten attics and abandoned places. The glow came from a single lantern placed on a wooden table in the middle of the room. The light cast strange, dancing shadows on the walls, making the room feel smaller like it was closing in on her.

Emily's throat tightened. I need to get out of here, she thought, but something—someone—moved in the shadows.

"Emily..." The voice was soft, barely a whisper.

A figure emerged from the darkness, a woman draped in tattered clothes. Her eyes were hollow, her face gaunt, as though she hadn't seen sunlight in years. She held an old, rusted lantern in her hands, identical to the one Emily was carrying.

"You took my lantern," the woman rasped, her voice like dry leaves crumbling underfoot.

Emily's heart raced. This isn't real. This isn't happening.

The woman's eyes, black and bottomless, locked onto hers. "Now I take yours."

Before Emily could scream, the woman lunged forward, and the flame inside Emily's lantern flickered and died, plunging the room into complete darkness.

She awoke in a different place. The house was gone. The neighborhood was gone. Instead, she found herself in the woods, surrounded by towering trees, their branches twisted and gnarled like skeletal fingers reaching for the sky. Her lantern was still in her hand, but the flame was dead, and no amount of shaking would reignite it.

How did I get here? she thought, panic rising in her chest. The silence was deafening, broken only by the sound of her own ragged breathing.

She tried to move, but her legs felt like lead. She couldn't escape. The woman's voice echoed in her mind, repeating over and over.

"You took my lantern. Now, I will take yours."

Emily's breath quickened. I didn't take anything!

Suddenly, the shadows around her shifted, and the woman reappeared, her face inches from Emily's. Her breath was cold, sending shivers down Emily's spine.

"This is your home now," the woman whispered, her voice seeping into Emily's very bones.

Emily screamed, but no sound came out. The woods closed in on her, the shadows swallowing her whole.

The next morning, the sun rose over the quiet streets, and Halloween decorations swayed gently in the breeze. Children once again filled the sidewalks, their laughter ringing through the air as they rushed to the next house for candy. But at the end of the cul-de-sac, the house remained empty, its windows dark.

No one noticed the single lantern sitting on the porch, its flame flickering faintly as if waiting for someone to claim it.

ON A NIGHT WHERE THE STREETS ARE QUIETER THAN EVER, EMILY STUMBLES UPON A HOUSE THAT SEEMS TO HAVE APPEARED OUT OF NOWHERE. DRAWN INSIDE BY AN EERIE VOICE, SHE SOON DISCOVERS THAT SOME FLAMES SHOULD NEVER BE KINDLED. WITH EVERY STEP, THE BOUNDARIES BETWEEN REALITY AND NIGHTMARE BLUR, TRAPPING HER IN A HAUNTING GAME WHERE THE PRICE OF FAILURE IS FAR MORE THAN SHE BARGAINED FOR. WILL SHE ESCAPE, OR IS EMILY DESTINED TO BECOME ANOTHER LOST SOUL, SWALLOWED BY THE NIGHT?

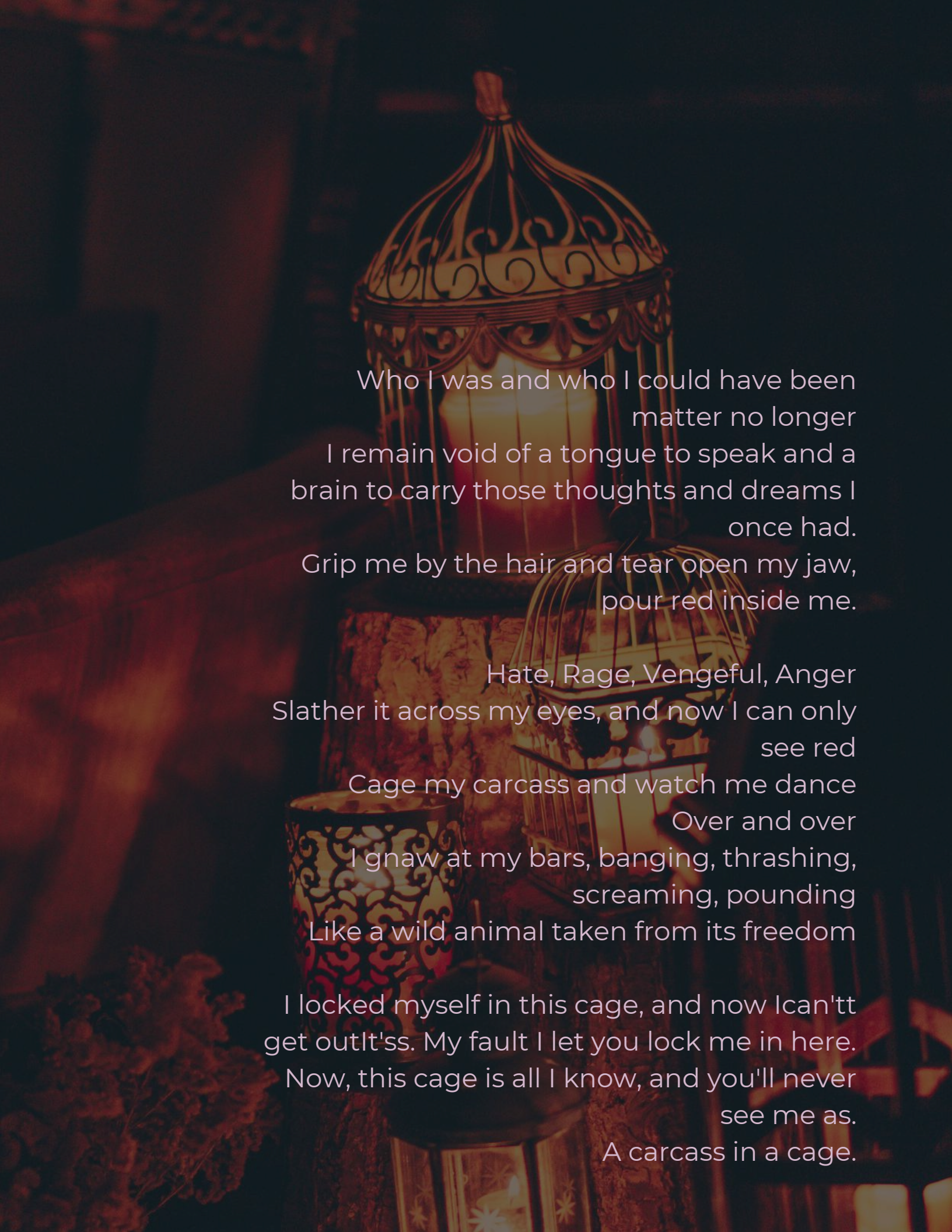
Carcass in a Cage

By Ayaa Al-Sultany

Bore a hole into my skull
you'd see the dark, thick ink spilling out
Pouring out like a broken watering can
Out of every crack and crevice that has formed
Perhaps I hit my head one too many times.
Twitching when you graze your sickly fingers against my bare scalp

Grating your nails against it like a chalkboard
Hands wrap around my throat,
squeezing and wringing it out like a wet towel,
getting those last few drops out of me.

Hang my null carcass on a clothesline and watch it dry out,
flowing in the wind.
Talk to me again. I have nothing to say,
no words come out of my mouth,
no thoughts out of my head.
I am completely devoid of my being.



Who I was and who I could have been
matter no longer
I remain void of a tongue to speak and a
brain to carry those thoughts and dreams I
once had.
Grip me by the hair and tear open my jaw,
pour red inside me.

Hate, Rage, Vengeful, Anger
Slather it across my eyes, and now I can only
see red
Cage my carcass and watch me dance
Over and over
I gnaw at my bars, banging, thrashing,
screaming, pounding
Like a wild animal taken from its freedom

I locked myself in this cage, and now Ican'tt
get outIt'ss. My fault I let you lock me in here.
Now, this cage is all I know, and you'll never
see me as.
A carcass in a cage.

Halloween Nights

By Farahnaz Hamidi

In the small town of Maplewood, Halloween was more than just a day; it was a season. The leaves turned orange and yellow, the air became cool, and every porch was decorated with glowing pumpkins. But no house was as famous as Abee Cee's.

Abee Cee was an old woman with fluffy white hair and a playful sparkle in her eye. She lived in a cozy cottage at the end of Willow Lane, surrounded by tall oak trees that seemed to whisper secrets. Every Halloween, her house turned into a spooky place filled with spider webs, skeletons, and flickering candles.

As Halloween got closer, the kids in Maplewood could hardly wait. Abee Cee promised the best treats and a few magical surprises. The story was that anyone who visited her house on Halloween night would get a special gift—something to make their Halloween unforgettable.

On Halloween night, the streets buzzed with laughter. Dressed as ghosts, witches, and superheroes, the kids gathered at Abee Cee's driveway, their hearts racing with excitement. The moon shone brightly, casting spooky shadows across the lawn.

With a deep breath, the bravest of the group, a boy named Tommy, stepped forward and knocked on the door. The door creaked open, and Abee Cee stood there, her eyes shining like stars.

"Welcome, my little ghosts and goblins! Come in, come in!" she said, waving them inside.

The kids entered the house, their senses amazed by the sights and sounds. Bats hung from the ceiling, and the smell of caramel apples filled the air. In the corner, a cauldron bubbled, sending colourful smoke into the room.

"Now, who wants to see some magic?" Abee Cee grinned.

One by one, the children gathered around her. With a flick of her wrist and a few

Magic words, she made a pumpkin float in the air, spinning slowly. The kids gasped in delight, forgetting their earlier fears.

"Now for the treats!" Abee Cee announced. She reached into her magical candy bowl and pulled out handfuls of colourful sweets, each wrapped in shiny paper. "But wait! Each of you must choose wisely; one of these candies has a special surprise inside!"

The kids' eyes widened as they eagerly picked their candies. Tommy chose a bright purple one, while his friend Lily picked a shiny blue one. They all rushed outside, excitement bubbling over as they opened their wrappers.

As they tasted the candies, something amazing happened. Tommy felt a burst of energy and suddenly floated a little off the ground. Lily found she could talk to the animals in her backyard. Laughter erupted as the kids realized that each candy had given them a special Halloween gift.

With their new powers, they spent the night flying through the air, chatting with the owls, and exploring Maplewood's magic. Abee Cee watched from her porch, her heart full of joy as she listened to the children laugh.

As the clock struck midnight, the magic began to fade. The kids gathered back at Abee Cee's house, buzzing with excitement as they shared their adventures.

"Thank you, Abee Cee! This was the best Halloween ever!" They shouted together.

With a wink and a wave, Abee Cee smiled. "Remember, my little friends, magic is all around you, especially on Halloween nights."

As the kids made their way home, they couldn't help but look back at Abee Cee's cottage. The lights twinkled like stars, and for a moment, they believed that magic truly existed in Maplewood, especially on Halloween.

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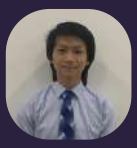
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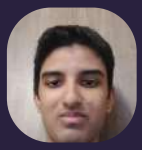
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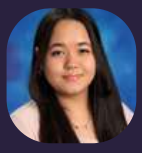
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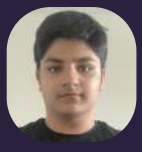
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